

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0856 0751523  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 161523Z MAR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7636  
INFO RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 3225  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1844  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7889  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 7163  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8735  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC

UNCLAS BOGOTA 000856

SIPDIS

STATE FOR: WHA/MWELLS; WHA/PDA FOR DICKSON/DUBOIS, IIP/WHA FOR  
COZZENS, LAC/SA FOR MCKECHNIE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [SNAR](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: NEW EMBASSY BRANCH OFFICE OPENS IN CARTAGENA; RECEIVES  
POSITIVE REVIEWS DESPITE OFFERING LIMITED SERVICES

¶1. Summary: The Ambassador inaugurated a new Embassy Branch Office (EBO) in Cartagena on March 3 with an opening ceremony that included the participation of the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Clemencia Forero, the Governor of Bolivar, Joaco Hernando Berrio, and the Mayor of Cartagena, Judith Pinedo Florez. About 100 guests attended the event, which was followed by a private luncheon for key Embassy contacts from the north coast. The opening for the first U.S. diplomatic mission outside Bogota since Barranquilla closed in 1994, received tremendous positive press coverage. End Summary.

¶2. The Ambassador inaugurated EBO Cartagena on March 3, accompanied by Vice Foreign Minister Forero and numerous Colombian government and local officials as well as representatives from the private sector. Ambassador Brownfield's welcome remarks noted the importance of the EBO opening, given it is the first diplomatic mission outside of Bogota since the Barranquilla Consulate was closed in 1994. Among the reasons for choosing Cartagena as the site for a new EBO, the Ambassador cited the increasing number of U.S. tourists, the initiation of direct flights between Cartagena and the U.S. in 2008, and the historical ties between the North Coast of Colombia and the U.S.

¶3. Services to be offered by the EBO will be very limited for now. In his remarks, the Ambassador stated that during the course of the year the EBO will offer cultural, educational, commercial, and administrative support. He also noted that limited consular services will be provided by the consular agent in Barranquilla in systematic visits to Cartagena. The Ambassador expressed the personal hope that eventually, in the coming years, more consular services will be established. However, he stressed that this is a gradual process.

¶4. The EBO opening received extensive and positive media coverage by all the leading radio, TV and print media outlets, regionally and nationally, resulting in numerous media placements. These included Caracol TV (11 million viewers), Caracol Radio (400,000 listeners), RCN TV (11 million viewers), RCN Radio (720,000 listeners), CM& (580,000 viewers), Cablenoticias (220,000 viewers), Telecaribe (550,000 viewers), El Tiempo (1.2 million readers), El Espectador (155,000 readers), Barranquilla's leading daily El Heraldito (123,000 readers), and Cartagena's leading daily El Universal (105,000 readers). El Tiempo's headline read, "First diplomatic branch of U.S. Embassy outside of Bogota inaugurated in Cartagena". El Heraldito's headline read, "Cartagena has a U.S. Office". In addition, the Ambassador gave a one-on-one interview to El Heraldito, which resulted in a separate article, in which he further clarified the limited services to be offered, as well as the process for eventually offering full consular services. For example, he mentioned that the EBO would also work with judicial authorities and armed forces, and that the limited consular services would include notaries and assistance to U.S. tourists.

15. The initiation and frequency of the Barranquilla consular agent's visits to the EBO have yet to be coordinated. As such, there are currently no consular services being offered in Cartagena.

Post issued a press release distributed to North Coast media informing the public that, for the time being, limited consular and American Citizen Services are only available in Barranquilla and full consular services are only available in Bogota.

NICHOLS